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Revelation Part II

“Look, he is coming with the clouds,” and “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him”; and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.” So shall it be! Amen. “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”... “Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.” Revelation 1:7-8, 19

Key verses: Revelation: 1:1-3; 7-8, 19, 17:14; 22:12-13

Key personalities: Jesus, the Apostle John and early Christians in Persecution

Timeline: 69-100 A.D. The Church is at a crossroads of struggle, nearly a generation has passed since the Resurrection. The Romans destroy Jerusalem and the Jewish people and Christians flee to what is now modern Turkey. So, what is next?

The purpose of Revelation is to reveal who Jesus Christ is, His person, power and plan for the Church, His people then and through till the end. The difficulty in interpretation is because of the extensive use of allegory and imagery, which has perplexed most students of the Bible. Thus, there has been more reading into it what people want it to say rather than gleaning the plain meaning by recognizing the genre of the wording and the historical situation of Roman persecution, and people in dire circumstances. Hence, sensationalism and false teaching are rampant as many interpreters look at the predictions and prophecy that may take place at the End of Days, ignoring the main theme of the ultimate victory of Christ as Lord over all.

There are two opposing schools of thought for the date of Revelation. The first is an "early date," approximately 64-69 A.D., during the reign of Nero. The second is a "late date," approximately 95-96 A.D., during the reign of Emperor Domitian. The main arguments for an early date are that the Temple, which was destroyed in 70 A.D., seems to be still standing. Also, it sets up what view a Futurist or and others like Preterist (Rev. 11:1-14).

Key Happenings: The Complete Victory of Jesus Christ!

The bulk of Revelation, Chapters Five through Twenty-one, are dedicated to John's seven visions in which Christ extols and rebukes Christians who waffled in their faith to be faithful, to get our acts together.

John gives significant details in imageries. Not only a glimpse of things to come, he also tells us how Satan operates and how to be on guard. Revelation depicts how God is still in control even when Satan, the ultimate false prophet, the great dragon, and the Beast is unleashed in his full power, causing insurmountable chaos and suffering. Satan is seeking to lead the world astray now just as he will in his final act by seeking to not only blaspheme Christ, but trying to counterfeit Christ and provide us with a variety of misrepresentations. He seeks to attack God's power and purpose and persecute those who are His (2 Cor. 11:14-15; Rev. 13; 17:1-9:10).

Christ is the Divine Warrior who fights for us (Ex. 15:3; Isa. 59:16-18; 63:1-6; Eph. 1:13; Hab. 3:3-15; Zech. 9:13-15; 14:1-5; Dan. 7:1-8), and we can take hope because God is the One who is still seated on His throne and wins (Psalm 2:7; John 5:21-23; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; Rev. 13: 1-10; 16:13; 17:14; 19:1-21). At the same time, God has his remnant who remain faithful and true to Him, because fulfillment is in Christ, not in the false words and deeds of the false prophet (Rev. 12:11).

In the last Chapter, Twenty Two, John's visions give us a depiction of God will win out and tells of things to come--a future history of the world through the Second Coming and into eternity. Jesus ends this letter with the importance of listening and heeding His precepts. We are to allow the flow of the Spirit, and to be Spirit-led, not self-led, especially with how we lead the Church. A church can only be successful as long as

love is penetrating and being modeled from its leadership and members. When love is lost, so is the church (1 Cor. 13)!

Revelation Keywords:

Many times, the metaphors used are directly from the Old Testament, as Scripture interprets Scripture. For example, the *Sea turned into blood*. This term is indicative of the first plague in Egypt (Ex. 7:20-21). It means the ultimate destiny of mankind as being judged and the preparation for the Second Coming and/or the Last Judgment. This is also called "eschatological;" it is from God and His judgment, not the pollution from man's industrial machine. Volcanic upheavals can also produce this effect from God's direction--see Revelation, chapter six notes (Is. 15:9; 2 Pet. 3:10-12; Rev. 6:13; 9:1). (If there is a metaphor you do not get, just place it in our search engine on our website with the word *Revelation* and we probably have covered it, or use our online Bible Study Aides channel.)

Apocalypse.. The accepted and understood meaning is that it deals with the end times, with what is going to happen at the end of the world. Also, the popular thinking is that this is about what is ominous, anarchical, and disastrous. However, the word, Apocalypse, has the same meaning as the word *Revelation*, which comes from the Greek word, *apokalypsis*, meaning the "discourser of events," as opposed to undisclosed or mysterious. Thus, even though Revelation has a lot of figurative phrases, it is not necessarily concealed when we take an honest look and compare it to other passages in the O.T. rather than pursuing trends or "newspaper eschatology." Thus, *Apocalypse* means something is being revealed as an "uncovering," an "unveiling," or, as we have it in the English, a "Revelation." Revelation is a book of disclosure and hope through John's seven visions and God's exhortations (Judges 6:11-23; Dan. 7:16; 10:5-21).

Thus, even though Revelation is symbolic in places, it is not hidden to us when we take an honest look and compare it to other Scriptures rather than trends or newspapers. It means an *uncovering*, an *unveiling* or, as we have it in the English, a *Revelation*. The other title that has been used is "The Apocalypse." Thus, Revelation is a book of disclosure of John's seven visions and God's exhortations; hence, this is why sometimes it is rendered in the plural, *Revelations* (Judges 6:11-23; Dan. 7:16; 10:5-21).

The testimony of Jesus Christ indicates that even though an Angel delivered this message to John, Jesus is the principle and prime Witness we look to so we can have the strength of faith and perseverance, and so our testimony is strengthened (Rev. 3:14; 19:10-11; 22:6, 16-20).

Blessed. Those who are faithful in Christ will receive the *good will* of God as blessings from Christ; those who reject Him will be judged. Being blessed also refers to the emotional states of satisfaction, well-being, and contentment that results from being approved by God and by the fulfilling of our duty. It is enjoying God's special favor and His Grace works in us. It is like being told by parents that they are proud of us (Matt. 5:1-12; Rev. 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7-14). This is a book more of blessings than of just predictions, as there are also seven *beatitudes* in Revelation (Rev. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14).

Prophecy points toward Revelation, which contains visions of future events meant to help us fortify our faith and remain faithful (Isa. 1:1; Jer. 1:1; Hosea 1:1; Rev. 19:10; 22:7-19).

Take to heart/keep. The purpose of this epistle is to strengthen our spiritual formation, not to seek melodramatic theories or sensationalistic ideas.

The time is near. God ushers in the last days and revealing to us His previously hidden agenda and plans. The concern is not just for future events, but also how we conduct ourselves in them. Whatever unfolds is irrelevant if we do not have the strength of faith to endure and learn from it (Heb. 1:1-2; Rev. 22:10).

Show is the hope in the midst of the reality of life and suffering. Being in Christ is eternal security, but dangerous in the world in which we live; we may experience *martyrdom* (Rev. 12:11). *Suffering* is a prevailing theme in Revelation (Rev. 2:9-10, 22; 7:14)!

Endurance is a call to remain faithful and keep our trust in Christ no matter what comes our way in sufferings or temptations. We are to focus on His Way, even in persecution and stress. This theme is prominent in Revelation (Rev. 2:2-3, 13, 19; 3:10; 6:11; 13:10; 14:12; 16:15; 18:4; 20:4; 22:7, 11, 14).

Patmos is a small, rocky island, eight-by-four miles, in the Aegean Sea between Greece and Turkey, then called Asia Minor. It was a Roman penal colony where inmates who were dangerous were sent and left there. John's exile here could also been clemency by the governor because he could have been executed. Church tradition states they tried to execute John several times but failed. This also puts John in the position to perhaps denounce Rome, calling them "Babylon (chaps 17-18)." Eusebius, a "Church Father" and early historian (A.D. 265-340), states that John was released from Patmos under the rein of the emperor *Nerva* (96-98). This gives credence for a late date.

The Lord's Day was a covert term to mean when the Early Church met for worship. It refers to the day of worship, Sunday, where Christ's resurrection, victory, and Last Supper were celebrated. Many Christians were Jews and still participated in the Sabbath observances, too (John 20:19; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 19:1-10).

In the Spirit means "spiritual exaltation," possibly as in *charismatic* worship. However, John did not solicit this vision; God gave it to him. The Holy Spirit provided John the visions and took him to places he could actually see. Thus, he is recording authentic images he saw in reality; this was no dream (1 Chron. 25:1-6; Ezek. 2:2; 3:12-14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 24; Acts 10:10; Rev. 4:2; 17:3; 21:10).

Lampstands. The image that God is Light refers to the Church as the body of believers and whose duty it is to be a light as a witness for Christ. His character is the Light we follow and proclaim. Christ is the Priest, Head, Lord, and Prime Shepherd of the Church. He is the Object and Reason why we meet and function. This refers to the O.T. account of how God's Glory descended into the Tabernacle. Now, our purpose is to point to His glory, as the Church is the light of the world. Christ is the destiny and pattern we follow and emulate. Proclaiming the Church as a *lamp stand* is saying the Church is significant as the true place of reverence to God, and Christianity is the true practice of Judaism (Gen. 1:3; Ex. 25:31-40; 1 Kings 7:49; Zech. 4:2; Matt. 5:14-16; 18:20; 28:20; John 1:4-5; 8:12; 14:18; Acts 26:13; Eph. 1:10; 5:8-13; Phil. 2:15; 1 John 1:4-5; Rev. 2:9; 3:9).

I stand at the door and knock is an image of our Lord knocking on the door of our hearts. It is a reference to His beckoning for us to come to Him and also a prelude to the "imminence" of His Second Coming. The request of Jesus is that the self-deluded and compliant members of a church who refuses to invite Christ into "their" church or be a part of "their" activities and lives are being called out by Him (Matt. 24:33; Mark. 13:29; James 5:8-9; Rev. 3:11, 19-22, 22:7). It is also a call for the steadfast and persevering in faith, faithfully trusting in Christ. This is also an image that our faith opens His door, our obedience keeps it open, but our pride closes it (Luke 12:35-38).

The Mark! Another popular apocalyptic symbol is the *mark*. "Mark" basically means ownership and control; in its context, it also refers to a forgery of the seal and love of God given to Christians (Ezek. 9:4-6; Rev. 7:2-8; 14:1; Rev. 13-14). This "mark of the beast" is about who controls us--Satan or God. This beast forces people to bear the mark as a way to control and also as a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit that "marks" a true believer. In addition, this is also a pattern of the stranglehold that has been repeated throughout human history, such as the trade guilds that controlled who could buy or sell in the midst of the church at Thyatira (found in Revelation 2:18-29.)

Also, it is the corruption as exhibited at John's time by both Jewish and pagan priests, and especially the emperor cults. Additionally, it is also represented in countries that are run with totalitarian tactics by corrupt officials and/or dictators. There are countless speculations on this, but it really denotes, from the word meaning and the context, that it is a metaphor for *ownership* and *control*, but the means by which this will occur is unknown. All we can do is see how this has played out before and be ready for the future. Fear-mongering over technologies and personalities are beside the point; neither Satan nor God needs technology to make this happen, because it has happened before in grand scale without it. However, since we do have it... (Eph.1:13; Rev. 14:9-11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20 and 20:4).

The Dragon or Red dragon. The term "dragon" literally means "serpent" or "sea monster" such as the *leviathan*, and for the Jews, it symbolized monstrous evil (common in Canaanite and Mesopotamian myths), and Heracles and his battle with the *hydra*. A dragon is also a description of Satan, who is the enemy of God, who is a terrifying and destructive beast, and who seeks the total devastation of God's people. This image is not meant to terrify us, but to show us how he and evil work together so we can beware and defend. This was also a metaphor for Babylon and the enemies of Israel and God. It is very unwise to read in meanings that are not there for this and other metaphors (apocryphal book, "Bell and the Dragon," Gen. 3:1-15; Psalm 74:13-15; 89:9-10; Is. 27:1; 30:7; 51:9; Ezek. 29:3; Luke 10:18; 11:14-23; John 12:31; Col. 2:15; Rev. 12:7-9; 13:2; 20:2).

The Book of Revelation is “The Revelation of Jesus Christ,” see how He is portrayed:

- The faithful witness (1:5)
- The firstborn from the dead (1:5)
- The ruler over the kings of the earth (1:5)
- The Son of Man (1:13)
- The first and the last (1:17)
- The living One (1:18)
- The Son of God (2:18)
- He who is holy, who is true (3:7)
- The Amen (3:14)
- The Beginning of the creation of God (3:14)
- The Lion that is from the tribe of Judah (5:5)
- The Root of David (5:5)
- A Lamb (5:6)
- The Word of God (19:13)
- King of Kings and Lord of Lords (19:16)
- The Alpha and the Omega (22:13)
- The beginning and the end (22:13)
- The bright morning Star (22:16)
- The Lord Jesus (22:21).

All these are proclaiming the Divine Authority, Sovereignty, and Lordship of Christ as well as the important relevance of Christ in us, so that we can have peace and anticipation in Him. Christ is Lord. This is reality for us, both now and when He comes back for us. Even when all seems lost and hopeless, He is in command and His plan is in commission. Although, it is John who pens the words of this book of Revelation and an angel delivers it, it is witnessed to as truth by Christ Himself who is faithful to us. We are exhorted to praise and worship Him Who is worthy of our praise because He has freed us from our sins and separation from God by the shedding of His own blood. He has made us a home, a kingdom, and a dwelling for eternity.

Songs and Hymns in Revelation: 1.5-6; 4.8, 11; 5.8-14; 6:1; 7:9-12; 11:15-18; 12:10-12; 14:3; 15:2-6; 16:4-7; 18:2-24; 19:1-8

Revelation is not a puzzle for which we must endeavor to find a code or secret meaning, nor is it a source book for our inclinations, theories, or conjectures. Revelation is given so we can see God at work, His Wonder of Wonders, so we can pursue our faith with more diligence in trust and obedience, and to be prepared when He does return. This means that as we lead our lives and run our churches, we have to seek Him and ask, *are we being disloyal to our Lord?* This aspect is far more important than the speculations, because it all comes down to one thing, loyalty. Are you devoted to Christ or a slave to your will and to the manipulations of others?

Key Takeaway: This is a very difficult book to interpret and many gifted scholars over the centuries have taken very different views of it. Yet, God's purpose for John in Revelation is not that he be condescending or judgmental. Rather, it is so he could offer hope and encouragement to the Church. At the same time, it points out the issues and problems so we can address them and move from our ways to His Ways. If we just sit and point fingers at problems, ignore them, rationalize they are OK, or worry we might offend people and do nothing about fixing them, we do the Church, God, and ourselves a disservice. We are called to know what we

are doing and His precepts so we can be better for His glory. Let's take a hard look at our church and see where we are with what He has called us to, and have the courage and fortitude to fix what we are not doing right so we can seek being our best for His glory.

Make sure you are not reading into the Bible what you want it to say; rather, allow His Most precious Word to challenge you to lead a great fruitful Christian life! We can agree to disagree over what is literal and what is figurative, or what view one should take--or take no view at all, as I do. The main point is our love for the Lord and our willingness to learn and apply His precious Truth into our lives and church. He is the One who gives us life, salvation, is in control, has a plan, and will work it out in His perfect time!

When you come to a word in the Bible, it is best to first assume it is literal, unless the context and word cry out, "hey! This may be a metaphor!"

The Call to the Church? Do not bow to sensationalism! Warning: A lot of Christian writers love to embellish on this subject and give their own version of what will happen. But, the scores of books that have been written in the last hundred years have not panned out in their theories. It is "their" theories, not ones based on fact or careful study of Scripture. The Bible clearly tells us we do not have access to that information, for no one will know the time... (Mark 13:14-37).

Questions to Ponder

1. Do you feel that Revelation is about what will happen to us personally as well as in a future culmination? What do you see as the main importance?
2. How does John call us to the privilege and necessity of reading and hearing and heeding His Word?
3. One of the main themes of Revelation is the call for us to stand firm and grow further in our faith. Does this surprise you? What did you expect to find from Revelation?
4. How can the plain meaning be far more important to us than what speculators have come up with?
5. How can we be better watchful of those who oppose Christ and make sure we are not opposing Christ in thought, word, or deed, taking oaths, or making promises that counter Christ's principals?
6. What are the images of Christ did you find? How does this give you more information so you can have a better, healthier concept of who God is? How can this translate into your daily life?
7. What can you do to understand what Christ has done for you so you can fully do your best to be faithful, even in times of pressure, waiting, and uncertainty?
8. What needs to take place to better connect your relationship with Christ more firmly? How would this help you receive hope and encouragement?
9. We are exhorted to praise and worship Christ as LORD, Who is worthy of our praise because He has freed us from our sins and separation from God by the shedding of His own blood. He has made us a home, a kingdom, and a dwelling for eternity. How do we apply this to our home and church?
10. What happens when pastors are not proclaiming the Divine Authority, Sovereignty, and Lordship of Christ as well as the important relevance of Christ?
11. How can church leaders be better at not reading into the Bible what they want it to say; rather, allow His Most precious Word to challenge and lead to a great fruitful Christian life and church?
12. A church can only be successful as long as love is penetrating and being modeled from its leadership and members. When love is lost, so is the church (1 Cor. 13)! So, what do you need to do in your church?